



# AFRICAN AMERICANS

in the UNITED STATES NAVY

*There is no black Navy, no white Navy—just one Navy—the United States Navy.*

—ADMIRAL ELMO R. ZUMWALT JR., CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, 1970

AMERICA'S  
**NAVY**

A GLOBAL FORCE FOR GOOD™



*African Americans have distinguished themselves at sea since the Revolution. During the War of 1812, the commander of U.S. naval forces on the Great Lakes declared black sailors to be “amongst my best men.”*



◀ *Opposite page:* Sailors man the rails aboard the aircraft carrier USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74) as she pulls into Busan, Republic of Korea, for a port visit, March 2009.

*Left:* Information Systems Technician 3rd Class David Clark participates in a visit, board, search, and seizure training exercise in the Atlantic, March 2009.

*Above:* Vice Adm. Melvin G. Williams, Commander, U.S. Second Fleet, greets retired Rear Adm. Lillian Fishburne, the Navy's first female African American flag officer, following a ceremony honoring his military achievements, February 2009.



**D**uring the Civil War, African American Sailors fought on every kind of Union warship, accounted for 10 to 24 percent of each ship's crew, and included eight Medal of Honor recipients.

African American Sailors served during the Spanish American War and World War I with distinction. One of America's first national heroes of World War II was a black Sailor, Mess Attendant 2nd Class Dorie "Dorie"

Miller, who machine-gunned Japanese planes during the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. For his heroism he received the Navy Cross, the Navy's highest medal and the nation's second-highest combat decoration. In 1944 the Navy also began commissioning black officers with the first group known as the Golden Thirteen. By the end of the war 64 African Americans had become officers in the Navy.



◀ *Top left:* Gunners fire a cannon on board USS *Scourge* in the War of 1812.

*Bottom left:* Sailors cook a meal on board USS *Monitor*, the Navy's first ironclad warship, c. 1862.

*Center:* Dorie Miller proudly wears his Navy Cross, c. 1942.

*Below:* The Golden Thirteen entered the U.S. Naval Reserve on 17 March 1944.





## J. PAUL REASON

Admiral J. Paul Reason was raised in Washington, D.C., when that city was still segregated and where his father was director of libraries at Howard University and his mother a high school biology teacher. Reason decided to become a naval officer because it seemed the most economical way to get an excellent education, but he made the Navy a career. As a junior officer, he served on board the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* (CVN 65) during the Vietnam War. As commander, he served as naval aide to President Jimmy Carter. As captain, he skippered the nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser *Bainbridge* (CGN 25). In December 1996 he became the first African American naval officer to wear four stars and assumed command of the Atlantic Fleet, comprising nearly 200 warships, 1,400 aircraft, and 122,000 service men and women based at 18 major shore facilities.

*“Conquer education. Be known as a good performer. And be a person of principle.”*

◀ Adm. Paul Reason, c. 1996.

Wesley A. Brown entered the Naval Academy in 1945. He had originally planned to attend West Point, from which several African Americans had already graduated. But when Representative Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (D-N.Y.) offered him the opportunity to go to Annapolis, Brown accepted what he called “the greater challenge” to become a Navy first. During his freshman year, Brown ran on the cross country team with future President Jimmy Carter, then a member of the senior class. After graduating in 1949, Brown entered the Civil Engineer Corps, leading to a 20-year Navy career in which he worked on construction projects in Antarctica, Hawaii, the Philippines, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In 2008 the Naval Academy honored Commander Brown’s achievements by naming a multimillion-dollar field house after him.

The Navy’s policies of the 1960s and 1970s changed the face of the fleet. The service developed an equal opportunity program that sought to eliminate bias in recruiting, assigning, and promoting African Americans. The Navy’s new affirmative action program achieved for the first time a black population in the enlisted service that paralleled America’s black population.



*Top left:* Ens. Wesley A. Brown, the first African American graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and his mother, Rosetta Brown, hold the diploma he received on 3 June 1949. Reprinted by permission of the D.C. Public Library © *Washington Post*.

*Top right:* Ens. Jesse L. Brown, of Fighter Squadron 32 on the aircraft carrier USS *Leyte* (CV 32) during the Korean War, was the first African American naval aviator to fly in combat.

*Bottom left:* Rear Admiral Samuel L. Gravely Jr., the first African American flag officer, accepts congratulations on his promotion, June 1971.

*Bottom right:* Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead speaks with Sailors from the precommissioning unit of the guided missile destroyer USS *Gravely* (DDG 107) after a ceremony honoring the service of Vice Admiral Gravely, July 2009.



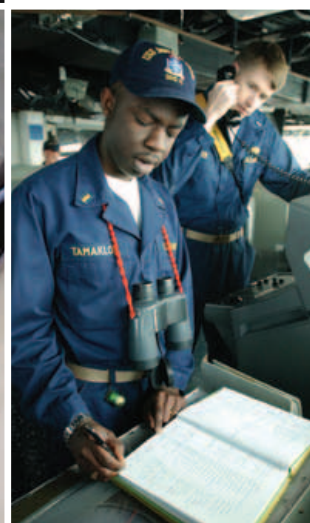
## ADAM M. ROBINSON JR.

Vice Admiral Adam M. Robinson Jr. grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, where televised images of the return of assassinated President John F. Kennedy's body to the National Naval Medical Center inspired him to dream of a career in the Navy. After graduating college in 1972, Robinson entered the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship Program, which offers a medical education in return for service as a commissioned officer. After medical school, Robinson spent two decades practicing surgery at naval hospitals and on board three aircraft carriers before embarking on leadership assignments. He exceeded even his most ambitious childhood dream in August 2007 when he became the 36th Surgeon General of the Navy and Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, managing 59,000 people, a \$3 billion annual budget, and comprehensive medical care for Sailors, Marines, and their families around the world.

*“No job in the private sector offers the breadth and the depth of the experiences that I’ve been fortunate to have.”*

◀ Rear Adm. Adam Robinson as Commander, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., in July 2005.





The Navy Affirmative Action Plan (NAAP) launched in June 1976 determined the number of black officers in the Navy for the next quarter-century. At first the NAAP set the recruiting goal for black officers at 6 percent, a figure reflecting the proportion of African Americans with college degrees. In July 1994 the Secretary of the Navy launched a new policy seeking to achieve a naval officer corps that reflected the proportion of black people in the

◀ *Top left:* Astronaut and Navy Capt. Winston E. Scott goes for a “walk” during a space shuttle mission, c. 1997.

*Top right:* Rear Adm. Earl Gay, deputy chairman of the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee, meets U.S. President-elect Barack Obama in Washington, January 2008.

*Bottom left:* Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician 1st Class Jeremy Stark surfaces after completing a dive in Africa’s Lake Victoria during a search and recovery operation for a Russian cargo plane, March 2009.

*Bottom right:* Ens. Patrick Tamakloe logs the presence of a nearby merchant vessel aboard the guided missile destroyer USS *Donald Cook* (DDG 75) in the Red Sea, March 2003.





## MICHELLE J. HOWARD

When she was 12 years old, Michelle Howard told her older brother she wanted to join the Navy. A quarter-century later, on 12 March 1999, she became skipper of *Rushmore* (LSD 47) and the first African American woman to command a U.S. warship. Command of a ship is a responsibility given only to officers in whom the Navy has the utmost trust and confidence. Howard was thrilled. “This is it!” she told a reporter. “This is all I’ve ever wanted to do.” Howard went on to lead an amphibious squadron, serve as senior military assistant to the Secretary of the Navy, and achieve flag rank. Rear Admiral Howard commanded Expeditionary Strike Group 2 and Combined Task Force 151, a multinational task force established to conduct counterpiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, from April 2009 to July 2010. As a two-star flag officer in her next assignment, she served as Chief of Staff to the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy on the Joint Staff.

*“This is all I’ve ever wanted to do.”*

◀ Rear Adm. Michelle J. Howard, Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 2, addresses Sailors and Marines aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) in the Indian Ocean, May 2009.

United States. This has been the Navy's goal ever since. As of November 2009, 7.84 percent of officers and 20.34 percent of enlisted men and women in the Navy were African American.



The Navy's personnel policies have enabled black Sailors and officers to achieve great things. Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Markland Grant moved from Jamaica to Orlando, Florida, in 2005. Grant dreamed of becoming a pilot in the military and started doing research on the services. "I fell in love with the Navy," he said. "I like the way the Navy does it. They send you to school for a specific job that you love, and you have a real career." Grant applied for and received citizenship so he could receive a commission in the Navy. As line shack night supervisor for Helicopter Squadron Light 44, Grant worked toward a commission through the Seaman to Admiral-21 program, majoring in professional aeronautics with a minor in management.

◀ *Top left:* Medical augmentee Lt. Pam Liptrot tends to a young patient from the Dominican Republic aboard the amphibious assault ship USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3) during humanitarian operations in the Caribbean Sea, October 2008.

*Top right:* Acting Secretary of the Navy B. J. Penn, March 2009.

*Bottom:* Vice Adm. Derwood C. Curtis, left, the commander of U.S. Naval Surface Forces and the Naval Surface Force, Pacific Fleet, meets with Vice Adm. Russell Harry Crane, Chief of Navy, Royal Australian Navy, March 2009.



## ROGER G. ISOM

Commander Roger G. Isom grew up with eight siblings in a house without indoor plumbing in rural Monticello, Florida, where his father did carpentry and Roger worked on farms to help support the family. Although Isom never thought he could be a military officer, a talk with a Navy recruiter convinced him to enroll in the Navy's BOOST program to do just that. After becoming the Naval Academy's top-ranking midshipman and graduating in 1988, Isom received nuclear-power training and served on board seven nuclear attack and fleet ballistic missile submarines. On 3 August 2006 Commander Isom became skipper of the Gold crew of the fleet ballistic missile submarine USS *Wyoming* (SSBN 742). Often called “boomers,” these huge “boats” are designed for stealth, precision delivery of nuclear warheads, and deterring nuclear attack on the United States. In between tours at sea, Isom earned two master's degrees, one in engineering management, the other in leadership and education development.

*“I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to experience what I once perceived as an impossible option for me.”*

◀ Cmdr. Roger Isom, 2006.

Black Sailors and officers have served in nearly every position the service has to offer, whether at sea, under the sea, in the air, on land, and in space. In the foreseeable future there will be no more “firsts,” for the day will come when a black man or woman will have served in every Navy billet.



*Top left:* Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Diane Sanders of Naval Health Clinic Annapolis is escorted by Chief Boatswain's Mate William Grammer as part of the individual augmentee homecoming ceremony at Naval Support Activity Annapolis, Md., April 2009.

*Top right:* Lt. j.g. Michael Frisby, a pilot attached to Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 5, prepares for flight operations aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69), January 2007.

*Bottom:* Able Seaman Edmund McCollin mans a machine gun during a Patrol Craft Officer Course at Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School, Stennis Space Center, Miss., March 2009.







## KEITH HOSKINS

Born the youngest of six children and raised in Parkville, Missouri, Commander Keith Hoskins became a jet fighter pilot because his father's encouragement to dream big helped him overcome a high school counselor's doubts about his ability. In 1989 he entered Aviation Officer Candidate School, becoming a naval aviator in February 1992. Hoskins spent three seasons with the Blue Angels, a flight demonstration squadron that puts on shows for audiences around the world, performing precision aerobatic maneuvers in F/A-18 jets capable of flying more than 1,200 miles per hour. Hoskins later flew combat missions, accumulating over 3,400 flight hours and 570 arrested landings on board aircraft carriers.

*“Regardless of who you are, what your color is, the military will honor and credit those who perform.”*

◀ Cmdr. Keith Hoskins, c. 2000.



In the 21st century the Navy's leadership remains strongly committed to diversity. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead declared that the Navy "must embrace the demographic changes of tomorrow and build a Navy that always reflects our country's makeup."

A person who is motivated and hardworking, and has the honor, courage, and commitment to serve, can achieve his or her dreams, regardless of gender, race, creed, color, or ethnic origin.

◀ *Top:* Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Alicia Lucas logs aircraft movements in hangar deck control aboard the aircraft carrier USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74) in the western Pacific Ocean, March 2009.

*Center:* Vice Adm. Mel Williams Jr., Commander, U.S. Second Fleet, left, greets Rear Adm. Victor G. Guillory, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command, U.S. Fourth Fleet, 2009.

*Bottom:* Members of Naval Special Warfare Boat Team 12 from USS *Whidbey Island* (LSD 41) prepare for an interdiction mission in the Gulf of Oman during Operation Enduring Freedom, April 2004.

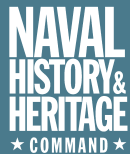
*Opposite page:* Lt. Constance Denmond conducts a weapons safety check for members of the visit, board, search, and seizure team aboard the guided missile destroyer USS *Porter* (DDG 78), March 2009.

*Photo credits:* Naval History & Heritage Command, NAVY.mil, and D.C. Public Library.

*Front cover:* Lts. Kertreck Brooks, right, and Sean Bartlett direct the launch of aircraft from the Integrated Catapult Control System "bubble" on the flight deck of USS *George Washington* (CVN 73) in the Arabian Gulf during Operation Iraqi Freedom, July 2004.



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